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PROGRAM Crossfire

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SUBJECT Espionage

ANNOUNCER: Crossfire. On the left, Tom Braden. On the right, Robert Novak. In the crossfire, Angelo Codevilla (?), former Senate intelligence adviser; and Admiral Stansfield Turner, former director of the CIA.

TOM BRADEN: How in the world have we permitted five veterans of the U.S. Navy, all cleared for access to secret information, to sell us out to the Russians, not once, but over many years? Didn't we decide some years ago that covert operations had to be small in order to be covert? Then how in the world have we put ourselves in the position of funding a 14,000-man army in Nicaragua? How good is our security? How good is our intelligence? Are we a crafty, careful power, or a blundering bunch of shoot-'em-ups?

One of our guests tonight is the man who for four years headed our Central Intelligence Agency, and he ought to know.

ROBERT NOVAK: Admiral Turner, I was astonished, in your new book, to read that you think we have the best intelligence capability in the world and that we are about equal to the Soviet Union in human intelligence. Now that it's coming out that the Soviet espionage rings have penetrated our secrets, are you ready to amend that judgment?

ADMIRAL STANSFIELD TURNER: Absolutely not. What I'm saying is a comparison. I think we get as much out of our human intelligence activity as they're getting out of theirs. You're seeing something that they're getting out of theirs. You don't know what we're getting out of ours, Bob.

NOVAK: You're not suggesting that we have penetrated

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the Soviet armed forces to that extent, are you really?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I'm not free to discuss that. But I stand by my position that we do as well for our needs in human intelligence as the Soviets do in theirs.

NOVAK: Well, sir, a lot of your old colleagues in the agency feel that we don't do that well, that the human intelligence capability, in fact, was downgraded under your watch at the CIA.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, it's absolutely untrue. And let's have some evidence of it.

NOVAK: Mr. Codevilla?

ANGELO CODEVILLA: I can't imagine that the Admiral would say that our capability to collect human intelligence is anywhere near that of the Soviet Union. We, after all, don't have the same kinds of collectors in the field that the Soviet Union has. Sure, we have a smaller number of people under diplomatic cover of the same kind that the Soviets have. But the Soviets have many more people who are under non-official cover. These people have access to a wide variety of Americans in a wide variety of settings.

Given the kinds of officers we have now in our DDO, there's no way...

NOVAK: DDO is what?

CODEVILLA: That's our Director of Operations in the CIA.

There's no way we can match that. That's one side of the answer.

BRADEN: What's the matter with our officers?

CODEVILLA: There's nothing the matter with them. They simply look, act, and smell like upper-middle-class American civil servants.

BRADEN: Let me get this straight. Let's straighten this out for everybody. Because Admiral Turner, as I said, was for four years the head of the CIA. And when the Reagan Administration came in, President Reagan appointed a transitional team. There's one for every agency. And in this instance there was one for the CIA. And on that team were you, among others.

CODEVILLA: That's right.

BRADEN: Now, Admiral Turner, in his book, Secrecy and Democracy: The CIA in Transition -- it's a new book, just out -- is very critical of that Reagan transition team. He says that it sort of ran amok all over the place, and he didn't think much of the members of it.

So we have a little confrontation right here.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, I mean we just had an example of it. What Angelo is talking about is quantity. And I didn't say anything about quantity. The Soviets get a lot more information by human spying than we do. But what I'm saying is so much of our information is available to them anyway that it doesn't do them that much good. Whereas what we get by our human spying is much more focused, is very useful.

NOVAK: You mean you're not alarmed by this Soviet penetration?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Of course I'm alarmed. Of course I'm alarmed, Bob, when our secrets get out. But you're talking the other side of the story now: What are we getting versus what are they getting?

CODEVILLA: It seems to me what you're saying is entirely gratuitous. I've seen the same reports that you've seen coming out of the field, and they read to me indistinguished -- indistinguishable from diplomatic reporting. These are not particularly useful things. I think any assertion that we're getting terribly high-quality reporting is gratuitous.

Indeed, it's a staple of directors and...

ADMIRAL TURNER: You're speaking as someone who has not been on the inside. I'm sorry. That's all there is to it. You're assuming...

BRADEN: Let me get this clear. I'm assuming...

CODEVILLA: If it didn't, it's violating the law.

ADMIRAL TURNER: No, that's not violating the law. There is no law about requirements for disclosure.

BRADEN: I'm assuming that the information which is given to...

CODEVILLA: We passed that in 1980.

BRADEN: Wait a minute. Let me ask you this. I'm

assuming that the information that you've given to the Director of Central Intelligence is not passed up to a committee on the Hill, of which you were a member.

CODAVILLA: It certainly is.

ADMIRAL TURNER: That's correct.

CODAVILLA: It is. If it isn't, a certain law is being violated, and we'd better be clear about that.

BRADEN: Well, I would hope that it would not be. But maybe if the law says it should be, maybe we ought to change the law.

NOVAK: I have something dawning on me that is just -- I can't quite understand. You're saying, if I understood you right -- and please correct me -- that the Soviets get so much stuff from open sources, from newspapers, from magazines, that it doesn't matter that much if they have penetrated the U.S. Navy and the communications security?

ADMIRAL TURNER: You're missing the point entirely, Bob. All I'm saying is that they collect an awful lot of information through spies that they also get through open sources.

NOVAK: Let me ask you this question. Are you alarmed that the counterintelligence capability of the CIA and of the FBI has not been able to catch these spies, apprehend them?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think one of the reasons we are seeing this surge of arrests of Americans spying against us is two reasons. One, we have improved the coordination between the FBI and the CIA, which was very bad for many years. And since Judge Webster came in, it's been very good.

And secondly, we have been in a process since late 1974 of rehabilitating CIA counterintelligence, which was zero for 20 years.

[Confusion of voices]

BRADEN: We have four people who are caught red-handed, they're caught red-handed. Now you, in your experience in the CIA, you had Kampiles, you had Boyce, you had others.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yes.

BRADEN: Now, can you tell us what you would look for in these people and why they went for 20 -- one of them for 30 years, I think, unescaped [sic], and apparently never with a polygraph.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, you have to look for aberrant behavior, different changes in their lifestyle: driving a Mercedes instead of a Ford, or whatever it might be. And apparently Navy security and FBI security was not detecting that in these particular people.

CODAVILLA: And because you were looking for these things, you had to wait for his wife to turn him in.

ADMIRAL TURNER: No.

CODAVILLA: This is ridiculous.

The way you ought to approach this thing is somewhat the way you lay it out in the book. You ought to have analysis of information that is available to them, work back through operational security analysis of our own operations, and you ought to be able to see what it is that they're getting. But this kind of analysis does not exist.

You made a certain reasonable effort to set it up in your administration.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Thank you.

CODAVILLA: You're to be commended for that. It's probably the best thing you ever did.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Thank you.

CODAVILLA: But you ultimately had a handful of people involved in that. This is a project that requires much, much more and which hasn't gotten that kind of attention.

NOVAK: Admiral, let me ask you something. I read your book. It's of great interest. I hope a lot of people buy it and read it. I was expecting, quite frankly, that there was going to be a lot about the problems we have in the cold war with the Soviet Union, their capability, their espionage capability, the menace. What I got out of here was that you were more concerned with the bureaucratic battles inside Washington than in your conduct in fighting your opposite number in the Soviet Union. I didn't find much about the Soviets in this book.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, this is not a book about the Soviets. It's a book about the process of American intelligence; and as the title says, the difficulty of balancing the necessary secrecy of intelligence with the necessary openness of our democratic society. And it is not a book to try to describe whether the Soviets have more missiles than we, and have more of this and that than we.

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NOVAK: Isn't that more important, though?

ADMIRAL TURNER: It's a very important, but it's not the subject of this book.

CODEVILLA: It seems to me that it is the subject of the book. You've made it that way by sending an inordinate amount of time in the book talking about things that you really don't know all that well, and criticizing...

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, I really don't like that statement of yours...

CODEVILLA: No, no. Let me explain it.

ADMIRAL TURNER: ...because I happen to be better informed on intelligence than you. I've been at the very top of American intelligence.

CODEVILLA: At the very top you get the papers that are shown you. You have never spent time studying it.

And one of the interesting things about...

ADMIRAL TURNER: That's an absurd and unreasonable statement.

CODEVILLA: It also happens to be correct.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, how can you tell I've never studied American intelligence?

CODEVILLA: Because you never had the time.

ADMIRAL TURNER: That's your opinion.

CODEVILLA: You admit in your book...

ADMIRAL TURNER: That's your opinion.

CODEVILLA: No, no. You say in your book that you came into the intelligence business never having studied it before, as a line officer...

ADMIRAL TURNER: I didn't say that.

CODEVILLA: ...as a line officer, without experience in the field. Now...

ADMIRAL TURNER: I had a lot of experience in intelligence before I came...

CODEVILLA: No one has the kind of combination of clearances and time and opportunity to study it like the people in the Intelligence Committees. You don't have that kind of top-down look.

If you had spent more time...

BRADEN: Mr. Kampiles, are you suggesting that before...

NOVAK: His name is Cotavilla.

CODEVILLA: Kampiles?

NOVAK: It's not Kampiles. That's Cotavilla.

BRADEN: Pardon me.

Are you suggesting -- I want to know something. Are you suggesting that before we appoint the Director of Central Intelligence, we go up to your committee on the Hill and choose one of you people?

CODEVILLA: Heavens no. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. I'm simply saying that he is claiming knowledge that he does not have. Now allow me to make a couple of points.

One of the points he makes over and over again is that the B Team that discovered that the CIA had been underestimating the size...

NOVAK: Explain what that is.

CODEVILLA: The B Team was a group of outsiders, prominent academics led by Richard Pipes of Harvard, and including people like Ambassador Seymour Weiss, who were established by President Ford to look and to see whether the data concerning the Soviet military buildup would bear a more sober interpretation than that which the CIA was giving it. The B Team...

ADMIRAL TURNER: All before my time. I had nothing to do with it.

COTAVILLA: Yes.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Okay.

CODEVILLA: But you criticized the B Team for being a bunch of extremists. They turn out, however, to have been absolutely correct. And the CIA turned out to have been absolutely wrong. The essence of the controversy...

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ADMIRAL TURNER: That's not true, but okay.

BRADEN: About what?

COTAVILLA: About the following controversy: The CIA had been maintaining that the Soviet Union was not building missiles for the purpose of destroying our missile silos. The CIA had maintained for a long time, indeed for some 12 years, that the Soviet Union shared the U.S. military's penchant for the doctrine of mutual assured destruction; and, in fact, that their missiles were largely inaccurate and were not meant to be silo-killers, and therefore war-fighting, war-winning things.

The B Team's technical panel found that the CIA had been misled by some Soviet counterintelligence moves, specifically the biasing of some telemetry from some accelerometers, and that...

NOVAK: You're saying the B Team was right.

COTAVILLA: And the CIA ultimately agreed.

BRADEN: Mr. Cotavilla and Admiral Turner, we have to stop for a minute. When we get back I'd like to ask the Admiral whether he thinks there's any possibility today of a mole inside the agency.

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NOVAK: We're talking about the CIA, espionage, the Soviet Union's spying with former Senate intelligence specialist Angelo Cotavilla, and the former Director of the CIA, Stansfield Turner.

Admiral Turner, let me very blunt. A lot of your former colleagues think you have really gone too far in criticizing your agency, of going to Sandinista Nicaragua, saying that the Central Intelligence Agency has been a shoot-'em-up outfit down there, that they have brainwashed the press, that they have gone into Nicaragua with some of the old personnel that you kicked out.

Do you think you might have shown a little more restraint on Nicaragua?

ADMIRAL TURNER: You are quoting me incorrectly. But in my opinion, the CIA is being badly damaged by the Contra operation in Nicaragua. For the last four years you've seen nothing in our press but criticism about the CIA's role down there. It's damaging it seriously. And we are doing things down there that the American people do not want to stoop to that level of ethics to do.

NOVAK: Have you been -- have you inspected the Contras?

Have you ever visited with the Contras?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I've been to Nicaragua.

NOVAK: I didn't ask you that, sir. I said have you ever visited...

ADMIRAL TURNER: No, I have not visited the Contras.

NOVAK: I suggest you do, because you will find that there is no CIA connection. I just came back from...

ADMIRAL TURNER: That's because of the law of the Congress. There was a CIA connection before that.

NOVAK: There hasn't been any in over a year.

ADMIRAL TURNER: That's correct.

NOVAK: That's an indigenous democratic resistance against a communist power.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Democratic?

NOVAK: Yes, sir. Against a communist power.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Oh, yeah, yeah. Sure.

NOVAK: Why are you making those remarks and grimaces, sir?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Because the majority of the leadership are Somozans.

NOVAK: Well, that's just incorrect. That's totally...

ADMIRAL TURNER: That is absolutely true.

NOVAK: It shocks me, sir, that somebody in your position would say it.

Do you know that Dr. Rodriguez, the political head of the FDN, was two years in jail. Did you know that?

CODEVILLA: Name them. Name the people who are Somozans.

NOVAK: Name somebody who was close to Somoza who's involved in that.

ADMIRAL TURNER: The military leadership of the Contras

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are largely from the...

NOVAK: That's incorrect.

ADMIRAL TURNER: ...National Guard.

NOVAK: That's absolutely incorrect.

CODEVILLA: Name three, if you can.

NOVAK: The United States State Department shows there are more ex-Sandinista officers in the FDN...

BRADEN: Are we supposed to sit here and think that Mr. Robert Novak knows more about the leadership...

NOVAK: I'm afraid I do.

BRADEN: ...of the Contras than the former head of the CIA?

CODEVILLA: Yes.

BRADEN: I refuse to believe it.

CODEVILLA: You refuse to believe what is before your very eyes?

BRADEN: I refuse to believe...

CODEVILLA: You're a typical ex-CIA officer.

BRADEN: I refuse to believe that a political hack, like yourself, who was appointed to a committee to come in and run all over the CIA, and Bob Novak, who's a well-known right-winger, should know more about what's going on in Nicaragua than the former Director of the CIA. I refuse to believe it. All right.

NOVAK: The thing that stuns me, Admiral Turner...

CODEVILLA: Hah!

BRADEN: Hah is right!

CODEVILLA: What the hell's the matter with you?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I'm stunned by the whole conversation.

NOVAK: The thing that stuns me, sir, I really...

CODEVILLA: This is class reaction. This is classism, by God.

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BRADEN: It's what?

CODEVILLA: Classism.

BRADEN: Classism.

CODEVILLA: You look down your nose. That's all you know how to do. What do you know about...

BRADEN: I certainly look down my nose at everything I ever heard about the Reagan transition team at the CIA.

CODEVILLA: Well, you read something about it in here. He says, for example,...

BRADEN: I didn't get my information entirely from Mr. Turner.

CODEVILLA: He says, for example, that the team was so bad that it caused its chief, Lawrence Silberman, to quit. The fact is that Silberman appointed us. And the fact is also that Admiral Turner, who was supposed to be a terribly checker of these things, never talked to Larry Silberman about it. And if he had...

ADMIRAL TURNER: That is not true. I talked to Larry Silberman. How do you know what...

CODEVILLA: About this?

ADMIRAL TURNER: ...I talked to Larry Silberman about? How do you think you...

CODEVILLA: Because he says you didn't. Because he says you didn't.

ADMIRAL TURNER: I did talk to him.

NOVAK: Admiral Turner, you said you quit -- Silberman quit when he saw the kind of team he would have at the CIA. I called up Ambassador Silberman yesterday. He said that is absolutely untrue. There is no truth to it. And I happen to know him very well, and I covered that. That is not the reason he quit. What is the basis for your saying that?

CODEVILLA: It's the same basis for his saying that the B Team were a bunch of extremists. This is why he does not talk about the Russians. This is an internal book. It's an internal political polemic.

ADMIRAL TURNER: This is an effort to describe the

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problems of secrecy and democracy. It is a problem -- it is a book intended to let the United States public understand the culture, the operations, the techniques of the CIA that can be disclosed.

BRADEN: And pardon me, Admiral. But what we're really talking about here and what this all gets back to is that when you went into the CIA, you took a lot of old hands -- and they'd been there for, oh, more than 20 years, and they were the original people out of OSS in World War II and they were gung-ho and they were running things, but they were getting pretty old and pretty tired. And you retired them. I don't know how many there were. Maybe six or seven hundred. But anyway, you retired them.

In any event, as the result of your retiring those people, an awful lot of people in the agency were mad at Admiral Turner. And that's what we're getting from these two fellows.

CODEVILLA: No. No, you're getting a hell of a lot more.

ADMIRAL TURNER: The real issue is I tried to take control, for the first time, of the espionage branch of the CIA and make it do what Presidents and National Security Councils want it to do. And they resented that because they want to stay independent.

BRADEN: And you got rid of some of the compartmentalization which allowed a Soviet defector to be placed in a cell out here -- not in D.C., but in the country -- a cell of about six feet wide, and not even fed, for three years. Terrible.

ADMIRAL TURNER: And also administering drugs to Americans unwittingly, and then observing their reactions through one-way mirrors.

NOVAK: Admiral Turner, I just want to ask you one thing. I was amazed to read, as a political reporter,...

CODEVILLA: Do you think these are the issues of American intelligence, what you've just said?

BRADEN: I think they are some of them.

CODEVILLA: Oh. You are uninformed.

NOVAK: I was amazed to read in here that you thought you might be appointed CIA Director by Ronald Reagan. Is that correct? Did you really think that that was a possibility?

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ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, of course it was a possibility. That is a nonpolitical job. I was a nonpolitical figure. And it should not change with Administrations. It only has changed with Administrations because the Republicans have consistently appointed highly partisan political figures to it.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, you know, you said that George Bush...

BRADEN: We've got as head of CIA Ronald Reagan's former campaign director.

CODEVILLA: We had as head of CIA one of Jimmy Carter's former classmates.

BRADEN: Gentlemen, gentlemen, gentlemen...

ADMIRAL TURNER: Is that a crime?

BRADEN: We have to quit.

We've been talking about Admiral Turner's recent book, Secrecy and Democracy: The CIA in Transition. And as you can see from the discussion, it's still in transition.

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NOVAK: Tom, I think your manners were even worse than usual when describing Angelo Codevilla, who's a distinguished scholar and an expert in the intelligence field, as a political hack. Some political hack, he.

But the fact is, he nailed you and your kind, you upper-class pretenders are the people who have put us at a disadvantage with the Soviet Union in trying to play this espionage game.

BRADEN: Okay. Let me respond by telling you that I don't think you know a damn thing about it. And I don't think Mr. Codevilla does, either.

Admiral Turner is quite right about the CIA. Its defeats are trumpeted to the world, but its victories go unsung. And that's the way it has to be.

NOVAK: Let me tell you one thing. He doesn't know a darn thing about Nicaragua.

BRADEN: From the left, I'm Tom Braden....